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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATE

12 September 1951

Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence

Subject: Communist Capabilities in Korea

As a result of regrouping, reinforcing, and stockpiling during the period of the cease-fire negotiations, Communist forces in Korea have developed their greatest offensive capabilities of the war. Increases in Communist capabilities are highlighted by substantial increases in troop strength, stockpiles, firepower, and air strength.

Ground

On 24 August the Communists were estimated to have had 458,000 troops in North Korea; since that date there has been a net increase to 613,000 in the accepted figure, despite substantial Communist casualties. The large increase in troop strength is due mainly to the influx of replacements, but some new units (notably two Chinese Communist armored divisions, each with an estimated 80-120 tanks) have been accepted. There are also unconfirmed reports of the presence of two additional Chinese Communist Army groups in Korea, which, if actually present in full strength, would add another 350,000 men. Previous experience would indicate, however, that these reports may have been inspired solely on the basis of the entry into Korea of small portions of the group.

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### Stockpiles

Enemy stockpiles in Korea are now believed sufficient to support a general offensive involving over 450,000 men for at least three weeks. In previous offensives, however, the enemy has been unable to move supplies from forward dumps to front-line units rapidly enough to exploit initial successes. Thus, even with the large stockpiles, it does not necessarily follow that the Communists now can sustain a general offensive for over three weeks.

### Firepower

A substantial increase in enemy firepower for possible future offensive operations is indicated by increased enemy artillery and tank strength and by the fact that enemy units are more nearly than ever before equipped with their full Table of Equipment allowances. The acceptance of two Chinese Communist armored divisions with a total of 160 to 200 tanks, has more than doubled the accepted estimate of Communist tank strength in Korea.

### Air

Communist air strength available for operations in Korea has increased substantially since the beginning of the negotiations at Kaesong. The Communists are now estimated to have available 1,260 aircraft including 600 jet fighters (including a recent increase of 200), 240 piston-engined fighters, 160 ground-attack aircraft, 160 light bombers, and 100 transports. The Communists may now have sufficient jet fighter strength to permit large-scale air attacks on UN forces and installations in Korea.

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In addition to the Communist air forces discussed above, there is increasing evidence that an International "Volunteer" Air Force has been formed in Manchuria. There is also some evidence that the USSR is augmenting this force with organized Soviet units from the Soviet Far Eastern Air Forces.

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